

PRESS RELEASE

Sonsbeek 2026: 13th edition of Europe's oldest public art exhibition returns to Arnhem next summer and announces curators and theme

Save the Date: Sonsbeek 2026
2 July – 11 October 2026
Arnhem, the Netherlands

Arnhem will host the thirteenth edition of Sonsbeek, Europe's oldest large-scale recurring exhibition for art in public space, and the world's first of its kind. Taking place in Park Sonsbeek and at partner institutions in Arnhem and the region, Sonsbeek 2026 opens on 2 July and runs through 11 October 2026.



Park Sonsbeek. Photo: Ben Bender, 2025.

Curators

Sonsbeek 2026 is curated by Amira Gad and Christina Li, two internationally acclaimed curators based in the Netherlands. Known for their transnational perspectives and their commitment to artistic experimentation, Gad and Li bring extensive experience across artistic disciplines and institutional frameworks. Their joint approach combines a deep engagement with Arnhem and its histories with a globally resonant, dialogical vision.

Orlando Maaike Gouwenberg, director of Sonsbeek art projects:

"We invited Amira Gad and Christina Li for their courageous and precise curatorial vision, and their knowledge of both the Dutch and international art sectors. With them, we not only realize a bold artistic direction of Sonsbeek 2026 but also guide Sonsbeek into its future as an organization rooted in Arnhem while addressing the urgent questions of our time through impactful projects that redefine what art in public space can mean today. The concept of Memory as Living Action turns Sonsbeek's history into a living force. Through new storylines, it reimagines the institution—its past alive, its present urgent, and its future boldly renewed."

Theme: Memory as Living Action

Sonsbeek 2026 reimagines memory as a vibrant site shaped by forms we choose, inherit, or need to share with each other especially when memory is fragile, contested, or deteriorating. This edition is presented in a time of ongoing conflict and global crisis, a marked difference from its founding in a post-World War II moment of reflection and reconstruction. Memory is seen as alive, in motion, and entangled with the urgencies of the present that include war and living in exile. Sonsbeek 2026 moves with this complexity, recognizing that the ways we remember and who gets to remember are shaped by socioeconomic power, geographical context and place, and access to information.

Anchored in Arnhem's layered histories are wartime imprints on architecture, landscape, and the collective psyche. The exhibition unravels memory as a place in which processes can unfold through the interplay of forgetting and remembering, where loss and recall act as complementary forces that enable rupture and renewal. Memory is a past to be actioned in daily life through a collective effort to resist erasure, transform histories, and shape the possibilities of tomorrow. Through artistic explorations, Sonsbeek 2026 explores humanity's complex relationship with preservation—our drive to protect what is at risk while letting other things go (consciously or unconsciously)—investigating how memory in action can generate ways of caring, resistance, and celebrating. The exhibition becomes a site of inquiry where traces of past events, environmental rhythms, communities, overlooked stories, and excluded figures that have shaped Arnhem and the world at large come into contact. Today, the question is no longer how to represent the past, but how to live with it.



Christina Li, Curator of Sonsbeek 2026. Photo: Marieke Wijntjes, 2025.

Program & Artists

Around twenty artists from the Netherlands and abroad are invited to develop new commissions for public space, in dialogue with Arnhem and its landscapes. Their works, from sculptures to installations, will critically and poetically examine mechanisms of remembering and forgetting, the politics of public symbols, and strategies of resilience. The full list of participating artists will be announced later, in 2026.

Alongside the exhibition, a rich public program of performances, films, lectures, and workshops will unfold during the one hundred days, in collaboration with cultural partners in the city of Arnhem.



Amira Gad, Curator of Sonsbeek 2026 Photo: Marieke Wijntjes, 2025.

Sonsbeek: Past & Future

Founded in 1949, Sonsbeek has pioneered art in public space for over 75 years, commissioning more than 150 groundbreaking works, many of which have become part of international collections or permanent landmarks in Arnhem. The organization is recognized worldwide for shaping the discourse on contemporary art beyond museum walls.

With the 2026 edition, Sonsbeek enters a new phase in being structurally embedded in Arnhem as a permanent cultural platform for art in public space. Beyond the recurring exhibition, it will now develop ongoing programs, educational projects, and a living archive, ensuring continuity and long-term knowledge production.

As a commissioner, initiator, educator, and partner, Sonsbeek art projects continue to support outspoken artists and experimental practices, creating works and projects that resonate locally while engaging international audiences.



Orlando Maaike Gouwenberg, Director of Sonsbeek art projects. Photo: Marieke Wijntjes, 2025.

Save the Date: 2 July – 11 October 2026, Arnhem
Further details, participating artists, and program announcements will follow in 2026.

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NOTE TO EDITORS

About Sonsbeek

Sonsbeek is an international platform and knowledge institute for art in public space based in Arnhem, the Netherlands. Founded in 1949, Sonsbeek is the first large-scale outdoor exhibition created after WWII. From its base in Park Sonsbeek, the periodical exhibition has known multiple groundbreaking editions that set the agenda for contemporary art internationally, while always maintaining a unique link with its local audiences. Sonsbeek is a place where knowledge production, experimentation, and sharing art with diverse audiences go hand in hand.

In today's world of global turbulence, where rapid and intense changes challenge us mentally and physically, Sonsbeek wants to offer a space to reflect on the impact of these changes on the world and ourselves. In this, Sonsbeek is guided by core values from improvisational theatre: be courageous; listen, truly listen; trust the other, yourself, and the unknown. These values serve as our guidelines to ensure we stay open to different voices, take risks and embrace multiple forms of knowledge. High-tech developments, new ecological insights, and embodied knowledge, deepen and broaden our work.

In addition to the large-scale exhibitions that take place every few years, Sonsbeek invests locally and nationally in the knowledge production and training of curators, producers, and artists as well as the constantly changing relation to audiences by a continuous program of talks, workshops, lectures, and screenings. Sonsbeek's archive, collection, and rich history serve as inspiration, knowledge repository, and contact zone for all audiences and researchers of modern and contemporary art in public space.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Sonsbeek 2026

2 July – 11 October 2026

Arnhem, the Netherlands

Main location

Park Sonsbeek, Arnhem

Partner locations

Institutions in Arnhem and the wider region

Website

www.sonsbeek.org

Social media

Instagram: sonsbeek_artprojects

Facebook: sonsbeekartprojects